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INFO RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 3704  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2756  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 5328  
RUEHMK/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY 2961  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 3976  
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0434

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 000222

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [MO](#) [PBTS](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: WESTERN SAHARA: GOM DEVELOPMENT PLANS ON TRACK  
DESPITE CHALLENGES

REF: A. RABAT 181

[1](#)B. RABAT 172

Classified By: Pol/C Tim Lenderking for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Over dinner February 8, Ahmed Hajji, Director of the Agency for the Development of the Southern Provinces, told Polcouns that he was basically satisfied with implementation of the agency's five-year, USD 800 million plan launched in late 2004 to develop "the southern provinces," which includes all of the Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara.

[1](#)2. (C) That said, Hajji highlighted numerous challenges faced by the agency in doing its work. He said work on construction projects could actually go faster, but the agency could not push things "beyond the capacity of people to absorb change." He cited the idea of creating fishing villages, which would entail re-locating several thousand households to the sea coast to develop the fishing economy of the Western Sahara. The Sahrawis, he observed, historically "turned their backs to the sea," and encouraging the local population to move to a new livelihood and new lifestyle was not easy. Development of the Boujdour port, he said, was going well, and he invited emboffs to visit that and other projects on subsequent visits to the Western Sahara. Hajji said another problem was that, despite the construction demands, there was only one small cement factory in all of the territory. Moving supplies from southern Morocco was time-consuming and expensive. There was room to expand greenhouse farming, as was occurring with tomato production in the Dakhla area, an enterprise visited by emboffs in 2005.

Hajji said that response to the international investment conference hosted by the GOM in 2005 was slight, and international investment in the Western Sahara was confined to a few isolated cases.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: During our last visit to Western Sahara, in late January (reftels), several of our interlocutors were unaware of what the Agency for the Development of the South was doing and could not cite any examples of the Agency's work. The local representative of the Islamist Party of Justice and Development claimed that the Agency showed favoritism toward certain tribes, which was creating jealousy and tension and exacerbating inequalities in wealth. We will indeed take up Hajji's offer to visit several of his Agency's projects on a future visit.

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